

1. A method for assumption by a service provider of at least one merchant function in a financial transaction between a customer and a merchant, comprising:

5 receiving information about the financial transaction by the service provider for the merchant;

automatically identifying an intended recipient of the information by the service provider for the merchant; and

automatically sending the information to the intended recipient by the service provider for the merchant.

10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the information about the financial transaction further comprises receiving an electronic check for the merchant.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein receiving the electronic check further comprises receiving the electronic check by a service provider server.

15 4. The method of claim 3, wherein receiving the electronic check by the service provider server further comprises receiving the electronic check from a customer's processor over the Internet.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein receiving the electronic check from the customer's processor over the Internet further comprises receiving the electronic check representing a payment by the customer in an Internet website transaction with the merchant.

20 6. The method of claim 5, wherein receiving the electronic check representing the payment by the customer in the Internet website transaction with the merchant further comprises receiving the electronic check representing payment by the customer in the Internet website transaction with the merchant at an Internet website hosted by the service provider server for the merchant.

25 7. The method of claim 3, wherein receiving the electronic check by the service provider's server further comprises automatically reformatting the electronic check for a merchant's on-line terminal.

8. The method of claim 3, wherein receiving the electronic check by the service provider server further comprises automatically endorsing the electronic check for the merchant by the service provider server.

5 9. The method of claim 8, wherein receiving the electronic check by the service provider's server further comprises automatically preparing a deposit for presentation of the endorsed electronic check for the merchant to a merchant's bank's server.

10 10. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the information about the financial transaction further comprises receiving a payment instruction for the merchant.

3 11. The method of claim 10, wherein receiving the payment instruction further comprises receiving the payment instruction by a service provider server.

4 12. The method of claim 11, wherein receiving the payment instruction by the service provider server further comprises receiving the payment instruction from a customer's processor over the Internet.

5 13. The method of claim 12, wherein receiving the payment instruction from the customer's processor over the Internet further comprises receiving the payment instruction representing a payment by the customer in an Internet website transaction with the merchant.

20 14. The method of claim 13, wherein receiving the payment instruction representing payment by the customer in the Internet website transaction with the merchant further comprises receiving the payment instruction representing payment by the customer in the Internet transaction with the merchant at an Internet website hosted by the service provider server for the merchant.

25 15. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the information about the financial transaction further comprises receiving an approval of a payment instruction for the merchant.

8 16. The method of claim 15, wherein receiving the approval further comprises receiving the approval by a service provider server.

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17. The method of claim ⁸16, wherein receiving the approval further comprises receiving the approval from a customer's bank's server over the Internet.

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18. The method of claim ⁹17, wherein receiving the approval from the customer's bank's server further comprises receiving a credit by the service provider server from the customer's bank's server over the Internet.

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19. The method of claim ¹⁰18, wherein receiving the credit by the service provider server further comprises consolidating the credit with at least one additional credit for the merchant.

10 20. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient of an electronic check for the merchant.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient of the electronic check further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient by a service provider server for the merchant.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient by the service provider's server further comprises automatically identifying a merchant's bank's server as the intended recipient by the service provider's server.

20 23. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient of a payment instruction for the merchant.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient of the payment instruction further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient by a service provider server for the merchant.

25 25. The method of claim 24, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient by the service provider server further comprises automatically identifying a customer's bank's server as the intended recipient.

26. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient of an approval of a payment instruction for the merchant.

5 27. The method of claim 26, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient of the approval further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient by a service provider server.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient by the service provider server further comprises automatically identifying a merchant's on-line terminal as the intended recipient.

10 29. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient of a credit for a payment instruction for the merchant.

15 30. The method of claim 29, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient of the credit further comprises automatically identifying the intended recipient by a service provider server.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein automatically identifying the intended recipient by the service provider server further comprises automatically identifying a merchant's bank's server as the intended recipient.

20 32. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically sending the information further comprises automatically sending an endorsed electronic check to a merchant's bank's server for the merchant.

25 33. The method of claim 32, wherein automatically sending the endorsed electronic check to the merchant's bank's server further comprises automatically sending the endorsed electronic check to the merchant's bank's server by a service provider's server for the merchant.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein automatically sending the endorsed electronic check further comprises automatically sending a deposit for presentation of the endorsed electronic check with the endorsed electronic check.

35. The method of claim 33, wherein automatically sending the endorsed electronic check further comprises automatically sending the endorsed electronic check over the Internet.

5 36. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically sending the information further comprises automatically sending a payment instruction to a customer's bank's server for the merchant.

10 37. The method of claim 36, wherein automatically sending the payment instruction to the customer's bank's server further comprises automatically sending the payment instruction to the customer's bank's server by a service provider server for the merchant.

38. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically sending the information further comprises automatically sending an approval of a payment instruction to a merchant's on-line terminal for the merchant.

15 39. The method of claim 1, wherein automatically sending the information further comprises automatically sending a credit for a payment instruction for the merchant to a merchant's bank's server.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein automatically sending the credit to the merchant's bank's server further comprises automatically sending the credit by a service provider server.

20 41. The method of claim 46, wherein automatically sending the credit by the service provider's server further comprises automatically sending the credit consolidated with at least one additional credit for the merchant.

25 42. A system for assumption by a service provider of at least one merchant function in a financial transaction between a customer and a merchant, comprising:

means for automatically receiving information about the financial transaction by the service provider for the merchant;

means associated with the receiving means for automatically identifying an intended recipient of the information by the service provider for the merchant; and

5 means associated with the identifying means for automatically sending the information to the intended recipient by the service provider for the merchant.

43. The system of claim 42, wherein the receiving means further comprises a service provider server coupled to a customer's processor.

10 44. The system of claim 42, wherein the receiving means further comprises a service provider server coupled to a customer's bank's server.

45. The system of claim 42, wherein the identifying means further comprises a service provider server.

46. The system of claim 42, wherein the sending means further comprises a service provider server coupled to a merchant's on-line terminal.

15 47. The system of claim 42, wherein the sending means further comprises a service provider server coupled to a merchant's bank's server.

48. The system of claim 42, wherein the sending means further comprises a service provider server coupled to a customer's bank's server.

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